

Strategy Research Project

An Approach to Forward Presence in a Resource-Constrained Environment

by

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Abstract

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Following World War II, the United States accepted the responsibility of helping both the allies and axis powers regain economic and military stability in the name of global security. Throughout the Cold War, the United States stood as the most powerful balancing force to contain the influence of the Soviet Union – again with the purpose of maintaining global security. Emerging from the Cold War as the lone world super-power, the United States' role and responsibility ballooned as they entered the War on Terror. As United States policy objectives grew, the ways and means required to secure those ends became unsustainable. This paper examines the environment the United States can expect to face in the twenty-first century, makes the case that force reduction is inevitable under the strain of the economic landscape, and proposes an approach to resolve the requirement for forward presence in a period of declining resources.

An Approach to Forward Presence in a Resource-Constrained Environment

At the end of World War II, the United States guided the western world through economic and military recovery. Beginning with the Marshal Plan from 1948 through 1951, the United States provided the conditions for European economic recovery. At times, this required the United States to accept great debt and to bear the brunt of the economic risk to ensure today's major European economic powers: Great Britain, France, Italy, and then West Germany, could regain a solid economic foundation.¹

While these states regained their economic composure, the United States provided military security. As the Soviet Union developed its nuclear capability beginning in 1949, the United States matured a presence in Europe. Additionally, the United States introduced a nuclear capability as early as 1954 to provide security and counterbalance Soviet nuclear capabilities.² As Soviet power continued to grow during the Berlin Crisis of 1961, the United States provided the balance to keep the European region secure.³ By the end of the Cold War in 1991, the United States had developed a complex network of bases with runways and training areas to support large numbers of conventional, forward-based forces, designed to counter a Soviet invasion by tanks and aircraft.⁴

On the other side of the globe, following the defeat of Japan, the United States established an occupation force in Japan and eventually a trusteeship in Okinawa until they, too, regained economic and military health. In the process, the United States protected the region from an expanding communist North Korea and China during the Korean War. United States presence continues in both Korea and Japan today at great cost to the United States.⁵

According to the *Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2012 Base Structure Report*, at the end of Fiscal Year 2011, the United States military support overseas included over 388 United States sites in Europe and another 194 in the Western Pacific. In all, the United States maintains 760 sites outside of the United States with several current expansion and relocation efforts underway.⁶ However, Europe, Japan, and Korea achieved economic recovery long ago. The Cold War ended. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Japan, and Korea maintain capable defense forces. With the world and United States economies in their current unstable state, can the United States afford to continue its robust, permanent forward presence, and, if so, should they?

A review and reduction of permanent overseas bases is particularly appropriate when the United States is simultaneously exploring force reductions. The 2010 National Security Strategy describes United States interests as security, prosperity, values, and international order.⁷ The Secretary of Defense's *Priorities for 21st Century Defense* describes the emerging twenty-first century security environment, and calls for robust forward United States presence and the ability to project power around the globe to protect those interests.⁸ A problem emerges in strategy formulation during a period of declining resources. With fixed ends and declining means, the ways to achieve the ends may have to change. The status quo of a large overseas-based force does not appear sustainable due to costs, reduced force structure, and readiness. The combined benefit of reducing overseas facilities while reducing troop strength helps to eliminate concerns expressed by a congressional overseas basing commission over costs associated with returning forces to CONUS bases.⁹ Further, the challenging fiscal environment provides a stimulus and opportunity to make wholesale adjustments to the entire military

apparatus. If done correctly, the United States will be positioned for continued relevance and influence in a period of significant change in the world's strategic environment.

This paper will propose an approach to resolve the requirement for forward presence in a period of declining resources. To do this, the paper will examine the environment that the United States can expect to face in the twenty-first century. Further, this paper makes the case that force reduction is inevitable under the strain of the economic landscape. The proposed approach to forward presence should help to balance a sustainable ends-ways-means strategic formula for national defense.

The Twenty-first Century Environment

In order to develop an approach to United States forward presence, one must first understand the strategic environment expected in the twenty-first century. The 2010 *Joint Operating Environment* includes the following four points that the United States should consider when posturing forces around the globe. 1. The world will experience a rapidly growing population of dissatisfied youth with few prospects for the future who are easily influenced by the promise of anything but poverty, disease, and pain. 2. Growing globalization and easy access to media will portray a significant division between the prosperous and the poor. 3. The means to reach and influence large populations will improve around the globe. 4. A rising China presents a potential, if not actual, change in the economic and political world leader.¹⁰ A holistic view of the emerging environment suggests that the United States should be prepared to rapidly respond to low to mid-intensity conflict over a wide expanse of the globe. Simultaneously, the United States should be prepared to deter and defend against a rising near-peer competitor in high intensity conflict.

The 2011 *National Military Strategy* explains that the twenty-first century will include a host of failing or failed states that provide a breeding ground for hate and discontent by non-state actors who can affect influence.¹¹ One has only to look at recent world events to see how effectively a group of non-state actors were able to foment violent protests following the killing of United States diplomats in Benghazi, Libya on September 12, 2012.¹² While this event appears to have been a targeted terrorist attack, the perpetrators were able to capitalize on the event to fuel anti-American protests spanning multiple states from Libya to Sudan and into Lebanon.¹³ The “Failed States Index” study conducted by collaboration between Foreign Policy and Fund for Peace lists these six states as “critical” or “in danger,” the two highest ratings for risk of failure.¹⁴ This example points to a trend that typifies the environment we can expect for the twenty-first century. President Bush’s 2002 *National Security Strategy* summarized this trend as follows: “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones. We are menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few.”¹⁵

The United Nations’ Department of Economic and Social Affairs published in their 2010 revision of the “World Population Prospects” that rapid population growth coupled with unemployment and competition for limited resources is driving instability in failing states. In most failed or failing states, populations are projected to explode during the next century. The population of the 48 least developed states is growing fastest. The population in developed countries remains fairly stable, despite fertility rates below that required for replacement. Developed states can expect to maintain their current population through migration from undeveloped states. While the population over the

age of 60 is expected to double in developed countries, underdeveloped countries can expect close to half of their population to be less than 24 years of age during the next century.¹⁶

The United Nations' 2010 revision of the "World Population Prospects" also explains that the increasing world population will be moving quickly to urban areas. The urban population is expected to grow by seventy-two percent by 2050, from 3.6 billion to 6.3 billion. More concerning is that the rural population, the sustaining force for food and other resources, is only expected to grow slightly until 2021 and then begin a decline through the remainder of the century, from 3.4 billion to just over 3 billion.¹⁷

Simultaneously, the Central Intelligence Agency's "World Fact Book" reflects steadily climbing unemployment rates. The high-risk states referred to above have unemployment rates ranging from 12.2% to over 30% and growing. The population of those countries that fall below the poverty line is increasing rapidly and is above 45% for Sudan and Yemen.¹⁸

Dramatic globalization with the widespread development of communication through the use of cell phones, social media, and news media provides easy access to huge portions of the population. We can expect this powerful resource to be exploited by ill-intentioned actors. Readily available media can be used to reveal the disparity in prosperity worldwide, generating hostility and instability.

To complicate the environment even further, we see a rising power in China. In an otherwise shaky world economy, theirs has grown from ninth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1985 to second in the world behind the United States, surpassing Japan, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Brazil.¹⁹ Some sources project that

China will surpass the United States in GDP by 2026 – signaling a potential change in world leadership economically and politically.²⁰ China's defense budget grew by 14.9% in 2009 and is now the second largest in the world.²¹ While China openly announced a 2009 defense budget of \$70.6 billion, the United States Department of Defense estimates actual Chinese military-related spending may have been closer to \$150 billion, or more. As an example of the ambiguity of China's sophisticated defense development, in 2007, they conducted a test of an anti-satellite weapon.²² The United States, Japan, and many other countries requested an explanation of that test, but have yet to receive a satisfactory answer. This lack of transparency causes concern within the international community. We can expect continued military modernization and expansion of Chinese interest within and beyond the Pacific region.²³

The 2011 *National Military Strategy* suggests that we can expect both state and non-state actors to increasingly challenge free access to and freedom of maneuver within the global commons and globally connected domains such as space and cyberspace. The rapid spread of technology will likely provide much more affordable anti-access and area-denial capabilities to states, criminals, traffickers, and terrorist groups. The proliferation of anti-access and area denial capabilities could hinder United States and international partner freedom of action. Non-state actors will likely seek to capitalize on these weakening and corrupt failing states as potential safe havens. The low barriers to entry into cyber and weapons technologies, previously only held by states, will become available to non-state actors to breed conflict and endanger stability.²⁴ The 2011 *National Military Strategy* stipulates that deterrence and assurance of free global commons in this environment will depend on the “ability to rapidly and

globally project power” through a posture that is “geographically distributed, operationally resilient, and politically sustainable through persistent partnering efforts.”²⁵

The 2005 *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support* identifies key characteristics of the future security environment as “the risk of wide-spread, diverse, rapidly developing, and asymmetric challenges to the United States, our allies, and interests.”²⁶ The most immediate and likely threat to United States interests is likely to be terrorist groups actively seeking to inflict mass casualties, potentially with the use of weapons of mass destruction, at vulnerable locations around the globe. Simultaneously, a powerful state such as China or an alliance of hostile states may present the most dangerous threat of an uncertain, high-tech, sophisticated force of growing capacity requiring continued United States modernization to balance.²⁷ The combination of these most likely and most dangerous threats requires a United States force that is postured to respond quickly to crisis around the world while maintaining a sufficiently modernized force necessary to defeat a near-peer adversary.

The Fiscal Landscape and Force Reduction

While the *National Security Strategy* and *National Military Strategy* unconstrained ends include global security with freedom of access to the global commons, one must consider the available means when developing the ways to those ends.²⁸ The world economy is presenting challenges to most of the developed countries of the world. The United States has experienced more than a decade in which spending has far exceeded revenue.²⁹ In the United States, nearly all of the collected revenue can be expended on programs mandated by law, such as Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, and interest on debt.³⁰ The Department of Defense spending falls within the portion of the budget that is negotiated annually between the President and Congress, known as

discretionary spending. Within our national discretionary spending, the Department of Defense budget makes up the largest slice.³¹ Therefore, as lawmakers consider ways to reduce spending, they will surely look to the Department of Defense for the largest slice of savings. As the Secretary of Defense explores options for budget reductions, he has the unenviable challenge of balancing modernization, readiness, and capacity to ensure the military of the future is postured to meet the requirements of the National Security Strategy.

According to the Department of Defense Comptroller, nearly a third of defense spending is designated for personnel and related programs.³² Research and development and a portion of procurement dollars are being spent for modernization, totaling just over 18% of defense spending. Simultaneously, operations and maintenance and the remainder of procurement dollars being spent for readiness make up 47% of defense spending.³³ Therefore, the largest portion of military spending is used to maintain a ready capacity – personnel. Simply surrendering all modernization efforts would make a very small impact to the overall United States deficit spending. In order to find savings that the nation needs within the Department of Defense, reductions in all areas will be necessary.

The Department of Defense 2012 *Defense Budget Priorities and Choices* warns that our military will likely face increased budget pressures.³⁴ Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta reminded an audience at the U.S. Institute of Peace in June 2012 that in past defense drawdowns, which occurred after almost every major conflict, the threats facing the country, appeared to diminish. Unlike past post-conflict drawdowns, today we continue to have significant threats. Terrorism, weapons proliferation, cyber intrusion,

and destabilizing behavior of nations like Iran and North Korea continue to threaten the interests of United States.³⁵

The 2011 *National Military Strategy* warns against becoming a hollow force with a large force structure lacking readiness, training, and modernization.³⁶ Further, the Secretary of Defense in his January 2012 updated priorities stated that this reduction in resources will “require innovative and creative solutions to maintain support for allied and partner interoperability and building partner capacity,” with particular emphasis on “thoughtful choices required regarding the location and frequency of these operations”.³⁷ As resources diminish, it becomes more important to precisely balance capacity, modernization, and readiness to preserve United States’ national interests.

The Secretary of Defense’s January 2012 *Defense Budget Priorities and Choices* clearly conceded that overall United States military capacity will be reduced in the face of the current fiscal environment. The Department of Defense must continue to reduce operating costs by reducing the growth of manpower costs and finding further efficiencies in overhead and headquarters. The Secretary of Defense further noted a requirement for reduction in military facilities infrastructure commensurate with force reductions. This document clearly states, “We cannot afford to sustain infrastructure that is excess to our needs in this budget environment.”³⁸

United States Defense Spending

The United States’ presence and commitment to maintaining security in Europe and Asia has led to 50 years of significant economic, social, and political growth. The United States’ security alliance with Japan and South Korea demonstrated commitment to maintaining stability in the region, and allowed East Asian countries to focus their national wealth on development, rather than on defense.³⁹ Likewise, European allies

have been especially keen on keeping a significant United States stabilizing and integrating presence.⁴⁰ However, a review data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reveals that the proportion of defense spending is and has been lopsided since the end of World War II.⁴¹ Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta summarized this situation aptly during a June 2012 speech as follows:

In the past, the United States often assumed the primary role of defending others. We built permanent bases. We deployed large forces across the globe to fixed positions. We often assumed that others were not willing or capable of defending themselves.⁴²

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's "Military Expenditure Database" reflects consistently unbalanced defense spending between the United States and the rest of the world. In fiscal year 2011, United States defense spending exceeded \$689 billion. Meanwhile, during the same year, our twenty-seven NATO partners, whose combined GDP exceeds that of the United States by over \$2.5 trillion, spent less than half what the United States spent on defense. Likewise, the combined GDP of the European Union exceeds that of the United States by roughly \$400 billion, yet that group of twenty-seven states, many also members of NATO, spent just over \$270 billion on defense. While the United States continues to spend in the neighborhood of 4.6% of our GDP on defense, NATO and the European Union spend, on average, only 1.74% of their combined GDP on defense.⁴³

Lest we erroneously consider those two groups of countries as delinquent, when one looks at United States defense spending compared to all other nations of the world, the United States spent more than the sixteen next largest nations in defense spending. Figure 1 illustrates how these sixteen countries' defense spending compares to defense spending by the United States. It is hard to imagine with numbers like these that the

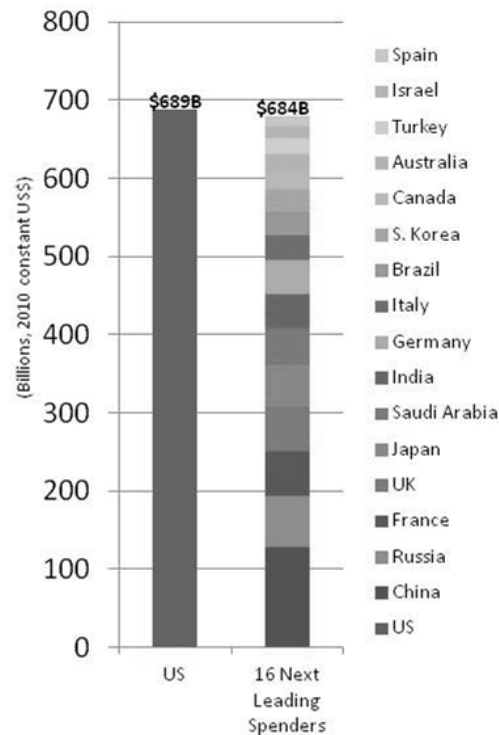


Figure 1. 2011 Defense Spending: United States vs. 16 Next Leading Spenders⁴⁴

Department of Defense can feel like it is hard pressed for resources. However, when the National Security Strategy prescribes a set of ubiquitous ends, the means and ways necessary to balance that formula can appear excessive.

The 1991 *National Security Strategy of the United States* acknowledged that as the United States emerged from the Cold War as the clear world leader, they accepted the responsibility to ensure world stability and prosperity. The United States understood the importance of freedom of the global commons to continued prosperity. Likewise, they understood the risks associated with regional instability. Even as the United States accepted the role as world leader and protector, they began to ramp down from the height of their Cold War military strength.⁴⁵

As the United States experienced episodic threats to freedom of action, such as: the first attack in the basement of the World Trade Center in 1996; the bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996; the simultaneous bombing of two United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998; and, the attack against the USS Cole in 2000; they started to recognize that the challenges of world hegemony may require a broadening of ends, ways, and means to fulfill their role. The attacks of September 11, 2001 resulted in an estimated direct economic cost to the United States of \$2 trillion, long-term costs for increased security, restrictions placed on air travel and, potentially, the most expansive re-definition of United States political ends in history.⁴⁶ As the United States entered the “War on Terror,” they rightly increased military spending to balance the ways and means with the stated ends. Unfortunately, United States’ Allies did not follow suit. Figure 2 illustrates how defense spending among our

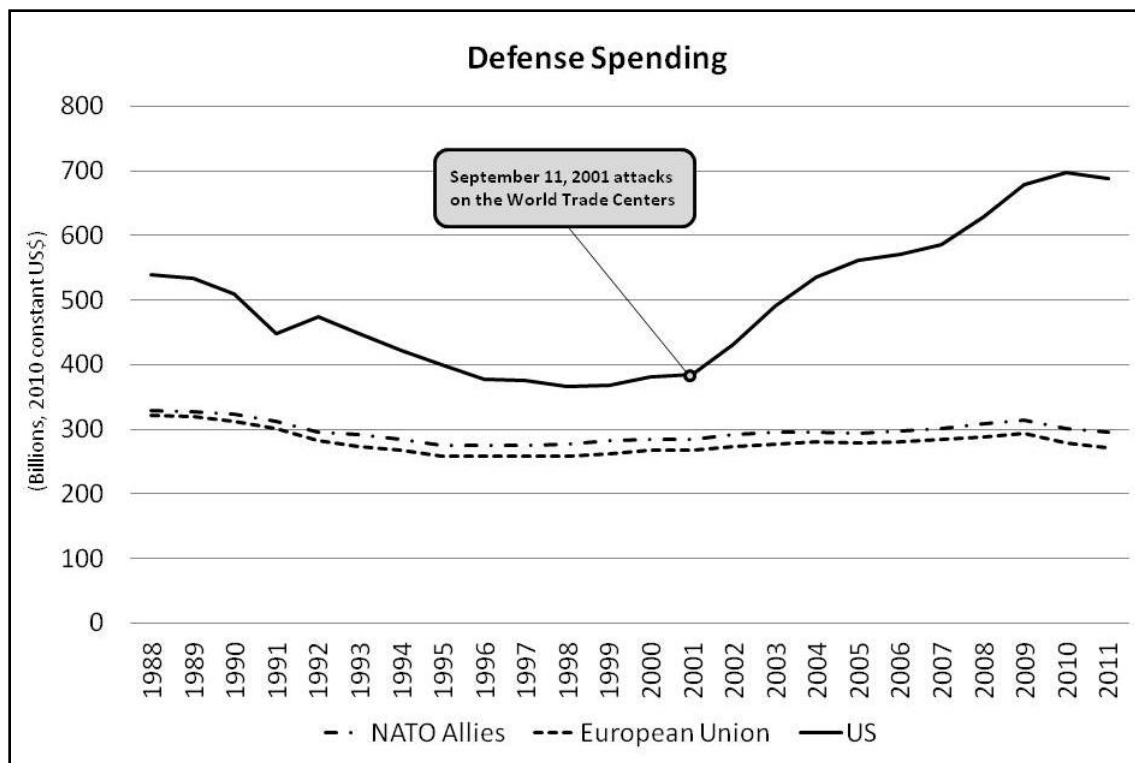


Figure 2. Defense spending trends⁴⁷

NATO Allies and the European Union remained relatively stable, as the United States defense spending ballooned in an attempt to meet our political objectives.

A potential flaw in this approach may have been the United States' willingness to "go-it-alone," if necessary, in their "you're either with us, or you're against us" attitude. While many partners joined the United States' effort to defeat terrorism, few continue to be as invested in the effort almost twelve years later. The Center for a New American Security, in their January 2010 capstone summary "Contested Commons: The Future of American Power in a Multipolar World," went so far as to suggest that some of America's allies are less willing to employ military force and many enjoy a "free ride" on American power.⁴⁸

The United States solution to these broad ends has been the lopsided application of "hard power." Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen both testified at the Senate Armed Services Committee in February 2011 that a more balanced approach and improved funding for the Department of State would be required for success in Iraq and Afghanistan. For more than a decade, the United States continued to commit money, material, and manpower to an issue that arguably could have benefited from a more balanced application of "soft" and "hard" power.⁴⁹ The Center for a New American Security concluded that "The status quo, in which the United States is the sole guarantor of the openness of the global commons and other states [ride for free], is unsustainable."⁵⁰

Current Status of United States Forces

The 2011 *National Military Strategy* affirmed that in Europe, NATO will remain the United States' preeminent multilateral alliance and will continue to drive our defense relations with Europe.⁵¹ An indicator of United States commitment could be reflected in

its permanent presence and activity in the region. The Department of Defense's 2012 *Base Structure Report* shows that the United States maintains 388 sites in Europe, which host approximately 80,000 troops and another 17,000 civilian DoD employees.⁵²

The 2011 *National Military Strategy* also recognizes that the Asia-Pacific region will host a number of the Nation's strategic priorities and interests. Meanwhile, Asia's security structure is becoming more complex with a mix of bilateral and multilateral security agreements. Much of this is being driven by a group of states with significantly growing economic strength and increased defense spending and influence.⁵³

In February of 2010, Lieutenant General Keith Stalder, then Commander of the Third Marine Expeditionary Force in Okinawa, Japan, explained to an audience at the Tokyo American Center that the United States is committed to working with Japan and South Korea to help improve security ties and enhance military cooperation. The United States continues to maintain a strong military presence in those states.⁵⁴ The National Military Strategy recognizes concern over China's military modernization and its activity in space, cyberspace, and Oceania. As a result, the United States is expanding military cooperation in the region. The goal is to maintain sustainable presence and operational access in the region.⁵⁵ The level of United States commitment to the Asia-Pacific region currently translates to 207 permanent sites maintained in that region hosting approximately 120,000 service members.⁵⁶

Author Ronald Steel, a prominent historian, professor, and United States Foreign Service diplomat, commented in 1967 that America was experiencing all the frustrations and insecurities of an imperial power without enjoying any of the economic or territorial advantages of an empire.⁵⁷ Forty-five years later, the United States continues to send its

expensive, most advanced military all over the world to secure the global commons and provide regional stability. While the United States accepts a majority of the risks and cost to establish global security, the benefits reaped from this investment do not appear proportional when compared to the rest of the world. The International Monetary Fund's *World Economic Outlook* shows that southwest Pacific states such as Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, and Vietnam report economic growth ranging from 5.1% to 8.3% as compared to the United States' growth of 2.0%.⁵⁸ Meanwhile the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's "Military Expenditure Database" shows that those countries spend between 0.3% and 2.5% of their GDP on defense while the United States spends 4.6% of its GDP on defense.⁵⁹

The Department of Defense has not been negligent with regard to containing military spending. In September of 2004, the Department of Defense had a plan called the Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy which intended to significantly reduce forces based overseas by 2012. The Congressional Research Service's 2005 report on *United States Military Overseas Basing* summarized that the plan called for a reduction of overseas bases from 850 to 550, returning roughly 70,000 personnel to the United States. The Congressional Budget office projected that this re-posturing would cost \$7 billion, but would generate a savings of \$1 billion per year after the reductions were realized. Remaining overseas bases would fall into one of three categories: large, main operating bases which would include all the amenities of United States bases like family housing, schools, and commissaries; smaller, more austere forward operating sites which would permanently station few personnel with significantly fewer amenities; and finally, minimalist cooperative security locations which would likely be run by host

nation personnel to be used by military forces in the event of a crisis to provide regional access.⁶⁰

The Department of Defense's plan for overseas reductions spanned the globe. A majority of the planned reductions were to occur in Europe. Nearly 200 facilities were identified for closure and 40,000 troops to be relocated. In Asia, the plan called for consolidating bases in Korea with a concurrent reduction of 12,400 forces while 7,000 Marines simultaneously relocated from Okinawa Japan to Guam.⁶¹

A congressionally chartered Overseas Basing Commission reviewed this plan and suggested that the Department of Defense cost estimate for re-basing was significantly inadequate. While the Department of Defense budgeted for approximately four billion dollars over the length of the rebasing effort, independent analysis estimated costs running as high as twenty billion dollars. The commission also noted a critical lack of strategic lift required to execute contingencies once forces were returned to the United States and an unaccounted for requirement for facilities to host returning forces. As a result of the Commission's concern over these shortcomings, they recommended that the Department of Defense slow the pace of overseas re-basing.⁶²

A current effort that may appear to run contrary to an overseas base reduction effort is the ongoing reduction of United States airlift fleets. The Department of Defense is retiring twenty-seven heavy lift aircraft, sixty-five medium lift C-130s, and all thirty-eight C-27s.⁶³ At face value, this may appear to lend credibility to the 2005 Overseas Basing Commission finding that noted mobility and material pre-positioning were key to the success of re-basing strategy and further expressed concern that current and projected strategic airlift and sealift were inadequate to support the Department of

Defense concept.⁶⁴ However, the Department of Defense is making these thoughtful reductions in concert with the adjusted capacity requirement. The Department of Defense's *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century Defense* directed a change, from fighting and winning two simultaneous major contingency operations, to conducting one major contingency operation to defeat an adversary while simultaneously conducting a second effort to deny an aggressor's objectives or impose unacceptable costs.⁶⁵ This is an example of DoD attempting to balance the ends-ways-means formula despite significant resource challenges.

As of January 2012, the United States' intent was to adjust the posture of land forces in Europe by eliminating two forward-stationed, heavy brigades. To avoid creating a gap in our NATO mutual defense agreement, the United States will align a U.S.-based brigade to the NATO response force. Further, U.S.-based forces will rotate to Europe for exercises while ballistic missile defense ships will be forward stationed in Rota, Spain.⁶⁶

Argument for Continued Overseas Basing

The 2011 *National Military Strategy* identifies core United States military competencies to include complementary power projection from multiple domains, joint forcible entry, and the maintenance of access to the global commons and cyberspace. Freedom of the global commons and globally connected domains are critical to all nations' security and prosperity.⁶⁷ Therefore, the *National Military Strategy* emphasizes partner nation support to preserve forward presence and access to the commons, bases, ports, and airfields. At the same time, this strategy describes global posture as the most powerful form of commitment.⁶⁸

Author C. T. Sandars explains in his book, *America's Overseas Garrisons*, that the Department of Defense defends its decision to forward base forces as necessary to deter aggression and demonstrate United States commitment. United States forces gain familiarity with overseas operating environments, promote joint and combined training, and provide responsive and initial forces in times of crisis.⁶⁹ Lieutenant General Keith Stalder provided an example in his 2010 speech to the Tokyo American Center in the United States basing approximately 28,500 military personnel in the Republic of Korea as both a deterrent to cross border attacks and to train Korean military. Further, the quickly deployable Marines stationed in Okinawa are a strong deterrent to the North Korean regime. The United States military seeks to deter and defeat these threats by being present, capable, and well intentioned.⁷⁰ Forward presence displays a capability and readiness to potential threats, expresses national resolve, and seeks to convince adversaries that the price to pay for aggression will be too costly.

From a Homeland Defense perspective, United States military forces must be trained, ready, and postured to intercept potential enemies, eliminate enemy sanctuaries, and maintain regional stability, in conjunction with allies and friendly states.⁷¹ Overseas basing provides a continuous presence in the approaches to our homeland to detect and identify potential threats in time to deter or defeat them. Forces stationed in our forward regions provide maximum awareness of threats, and maintain freedom of action to protect the nation at a safe distance.

Recommended Forward Presence Priorities

According to the Secretary of Defense, the twenty-first century environment coupled with the emerging fiscal reality led the United States to reshape priorities in a new defense strategy.⁷² The most recently revised priorities for twenty-first century

defense indicate that the United States must maintain its ability to project power in areas where our access and freedom to operate are challenged.⁷³ The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff specifically identified the maritime domain as enabling the bulk of the joint force's forward deployment and sustainment, as well as the commerce that underpins the global economic system.⁷⁴

The *National Military Strategy* recognizes that forward presence and engagement will take on greater importance during this time.⁷⁵ But at the same time, warns that forward presence must be established at a sustainable pace to include rotational deployments and bilateral and multilateral training exercises. As an example, as the Marine Corps withdraws from Afghanistan, it will return to an afloat posture with the capability to rapidly respond to crises as they emerge.⁷⁶

The Secretary of Defense maintains that the military must have the capacity to confront aggression and defeat more than one enemy at a time.⁷⁷ It is widely accepted that the United States military will become smaller and leaner, but must remain agile, flexible, and quickly deployable. The challenge will be to balance that capacity and readiness with the requirement for cutting edge technology. The latest Department of Defense budget guidance suggests that the United States military step away from permanently forward based forces that develop only bilateral relationships with the host nation. Instead, the focus should be on a security cooperation force focused on becoming the security partner of choice with a growing number of nations around the globe.⁷⁸

The Department of Defense's *Priorities for the 21st Century Defense* prioritizes the Asia-Pacific region while maintaining appropriate focus on the Middle East.⁷⁹ As we

move in that direction, the focus must be on helping more nations share the responsibilities and costs of providing security by investing in alliances and partnerships. In many cases, it may be appropriate to shift from permanently forward-based forces to innovative rotational deployments to engage in exercises, training, and assistance to build new alliances and partners. In June 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta explained that our new strategy recognizes that we no longer live in a world where other nations are unwilling or unable to defend themselves and calls for adjustments across the entire national security enterprise.⁸⁰

The Center for a New American Security's capstone summary, "Contested Commons," identified that the United States is facing an increasing reluctance from many host nations to support large military bases. Maintaining the ability to project power world-wide requires the use of forward bases in key regions, which is costly.⁸¹ The dilemma that the United States faces is how to maintain a persistent power projection capability without fomenting resentment by host nations and their neighbors in the region. A partial answer lies in a shift to expeditionary, sea-based forces. However, even the most advanced expeditionary naval platforms require regional logistics bases for sustained operations.

The Secretary of Defense explained that to move away from a large network of overseas bases, the United States must optimize the selection of innovative, small-footprint deployments of United States forces and capabilities to key strategic locations around the globe.⁸² The Congressional Research Service report on *U.S. Military Overseas Basing* noted that redistributed forces must be located where they are closer to, and better able to respond to, potential trouble spots.⁸³ The transition from today's

lay down to a reduced overseas footprint must be deliberately slow and methodical to prevent the perception, by our partners, of simply packing-up and leaving. The Secretary of Defense identified that the United States military must develop a partnering culture.⁸⁴ Development of improved language skills, cultural training, and an improved and collaborative working relationship with the Department of State and USAID will enable a smooth transition that will seek to prevent our partners from feeling abandoned. Further, the United States must develop close relationships with the host nations of those remaining permanent bases to reduce the risk of limits of use that have arisen in the past.⁸⁵ As the United States attempts to refine basing locations, we should keep in mind that United States presence means different things to different actors. Alexander Cooley's book, *Base Politics: Democratic Change and the U.S. Military Overseas*, explains that to some, United States presence means a guarantee of security, while others may see it as a political endorsement of that state's ruling power. Our presence could also be viewed as an economic opportunity or a violation on national sovereignty.⁸⁶

As the United States adjusts the ways to achieve our national objectives with declining means, five key factors should be considered. First, forward presence remains essential to maintaining global security. Second, use of the maritime domain provides flexibility in projecting power; especially as we shift toward the Pacific. Third, our adjusted approach to national defense must demonstrate a commitment to our security partners while simultaneously recognizing a growing reluctance by partner nations to host large United States bases. Fourth, as the relative power of many of our partners grows, we must ensure that they share the responsibility and cost of their

regional security. Fifth, as United States forces become leaner, we must preserve flexibility to adjust to a changing operating environment. Therefore, as the United States seeks to resolve the requirement for forward presence during this resource-constrained environment, the following fundamentals are suggested:

Focus on Sea Power

The United States current basing structure violates one of Sun Tzu's postulates that is used to justify United States doctrines of Maneuver Warfare and Operational Maneuver From the Sea, "...when he prepares everywhere he will be weak everywhere."⁸⁷ The United States tries to circumvent this principle by being present everywhere in strength. They simply cannot afford to cover the globe with robust permanently forward-based forces.

Sea Power offers great flexibility over wide expanses. Naval forces can respond in force across a large geographic area. Distributed naval forces can concentrate at key locations when required, or disperse to provide wider, lower level coverage. A naval force provides simultaneous protection of the global commons and maneuver within that domain. It places potential adversaries in a dilemma, and makes them defend everywhere or risk being vulnerable at their uncovered or weakest spots.

A focus on sea power as the primary overseas instrument should not imply abandonment of the land or air powers. Rather, it requires a rebalance of forces to ensure the correct capacity in each domain to secure the homeland and preserve the ability to project power when necessary. It is precisely the dominant land and air power capacity that makes the United States the partner of choice for those nations seeking security.

Build Partner Relationships to Secure Access

To support the flexibility of our basing strategy, the United States must focus on building partner relationships. It has been demonstrated, in numerous examples, that maintaining a base in a particular country does not automatically translate into assured access during a crisis. Most basing agreements contain clauses that preserve the host nation's right to approve the use of bases during wartime; specifically to prevent being committed to a war counter to their national interests.⁸⁸ For example, although the United States maintains seventeen sites and a significant historical presence in Turkey, that country denied the use of its territory, including its airspace, by United States forces to support attacks into Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. Turkey had previously authorized the use of bases in attacks against Iraq in 1991.⁸⁹ Additionally, while the United States maintained four major bases with nearly 12,000 troops in Spain in 1986, Spain denied the United States over flight rights for the air strikes on Libya. Conversely, following the United States withdrawal of forces from bases at Torrejon and Moron, Spain allowed the use of those air bases in support of military staging and bomber flights during Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom respectively.⁹⁰

These examples stress the importance of building multiple strong partner relationships in key regions. The more partners the United States can build, the better the chances are that one can be found that will support our forces in times of crisis. An example that supports this notion is Spain allowing United States transport aircraft to refuel in support of operations in Lebanon in 1958 while France and Italy, both partners, refused support.⁹¹ An indirect benefit of developing and maintaining a healthy group of security partners in a region is the emergence of a sounding board through those relationships. If none of the partners in a region will support United States efforts, and

certainly if they go out of their way to make it more difficult by denying over-flight or port access, which may give United States leaders cause to reconsider their political activity and re-assess the potential cost of their actions.

Coincidentally, naval forces are particularly well suited for security cooperation and partner building. Often the smaller, expeditionary forces can arrive in foreign ports or shores with very low burden on local support infrastructure. Designed to be self-sufficient, these expeditionary forces can develop close military-to-military relationships without requiring significant host-nation support. Further, the smaller scale of the expeditionary forces is more readily identifiable with many of the smaller partners in critical regions throughout the world. This may encourage additional participation and partnership.

Limit Permanent Overseas Presence to Strategic Locations

Even a predominately naval force requires forward permanent bases for logistical support. In normal peacetime operations, these bases are required for resupply and maintenance. In a contingency, forward bases will be required to re-arm and re-fit. Access to port facilities, capable of loading and offloading both commercial and tactical shipping, and airfields capable of supporting strategic airlift, will be essential for American power projection. However, the size of the bases during peacetime operations, to include the number of permanent personnel based at these locations, should be minimized to reduce overhead costs. Further a reduced presence may minimize resentment by host nation citizens and neighboring states generated by the presence of a foreign force. The force must be light enough to be sustainable, but also large enough to support rotational deployments for exercises and contingency operations.

These smaller, consolidated bases should be located in areas that support rapid naval or air response to the regions that present the most likely threat to the global commons and American interests. Based on the *Joint Operating Environment* assessment of the twenty-first century environment, the United States can expect considerable unrest and instability in Northern and Central Africa. Non-state actors and nations bordering naval choke points such as the straits of Gibraltar, Bab el Mandeb, Hormuz, Malacca, the Suez and Panama Canals, also pose potential threats. Additionally, long sea lines of communication: across the South Pacific; contested territories; and potentially unstable South China Sea; will require a ready crisis response and force projection capability.

Focus on Critical Global Commons

The *National Military Strategy* supports freedom of the global commons around the world.⁹² However, security of the global commons is not necessarily the sole responsibility of the United States. Some areas of the world may pose no direct threat to the interests of United States other than potential for instability to spill over into regions that are of interest to the United States. The United States must determine if nations are willing and able to provide security in their regions. If they can, perhaps the United States should focus on partnership with the goal of assured access in the region. If the regional powers are not capable of securing a critical area, the United States may need to seek a permanent basing agreement. The consistent theme in selecting permanent basing sites is to maximize responsiveness while minimizing the infrastructure that must be maintained.

Reduce Presence where Partner Nations can Support

If a critical region can be secured by other national alliances, less focus can be placed on permanent basing. An example is presented in the Southwest Pacific region. In 2004 the Straits of Malacca experienced thirty-four piracy attacks. That number dropped to two attacks in 2008. This decline was not the result of unilateral United States Naval activity. The United States, in concert with Japan and Australia, began working quietly to coordinate cooperation between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, who were historically distrustful of each other. Through continued cooperation and partnering, these growing economic and military powers successfully maintain freedom of navigation in these commons.⁹³ Regional partnering offered a solution that did not appear infringe on the sovereign responsibilities and powers in the region. This type of activity serves as a model to emulate in other areas of the world.

Reduce Large Land Forces in Europe

The United States should consider reductions to the 232 permanent basing sites and large land forces in Germany. It is easy to argue the strategic importance of bases like Ramstein Air Base and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center for their air throughput and medical support to wounded warriors enroute to the United States. However, the maintenance of a permanently based, large land force in Europe to preserve flexibility, resilience, and strategic options may not be sustainable during a period of reduced defense spending. Many of the European facilities maintained by the United States are used to train European partners and assure allies of the United States' commitment to their security. Nearly seventy years after World War II, the United States is still treating allies as security dependents. If European facilities are required to preserve a security partnership, perhaps United States' allies can accept a larger portion of the cost to host

the facilities necessary for a strong defense relationship. The presence of responsive naval expeditionary forces in the Mediterranean and strategic air capabilities in key locations coupled with assured access through strong partnership will preserve the United States' ability to project power when necessary.

Build Flexibility in Basing Strategy

The maintenance of large infrastructure on overseas bases drives high costs and limits flexibility in adjusting the overseas basing strategy. Aboard the 760 sites maintained outside of the United States, the United States pays to use over 54,000 buildings.⁹⁴ In order to build flexibility into the basing strategy, the United States should seek to consolidate bases where possible and minimize the infrastructure. In some cases, legitimate missions exist to require a large permanent contingent. In other cases, a much smaller permanent personnel force could sustain the infrastructure and support rotational forces or transitional forces responding to a regional crisis.

Conclusion

As far back as fifty years ago, Dean Acheson, former Secretary of State under President Truman, called for a revitalized military strategy where the European allies accepted increased responsibility for their own defense by building their conventional military forces to be complemented by a strong United States force posture and nuclear deterrent.⁹⁵ This idea, of accepting a fair-share while capitalizing on unique capabilities of various partners for global security, still appears to be a logical solution today.

As the United States turns its fiscal challenges into a stimulating opportunity, the United States military should focus on sea power as a strategic maneuver enabler. This focus will provide flexibility and responsiveness and serves as a vehicle for wide-spread security cooperation and facilitates building partner capacity. Even with this naval

expeditionary focus, there will be a continued requirement to maintain key strategic permanent forward bases to provide logistical support to naval and aviation forces. The locations of these forward bases should provide flexibility within reach of failed or failing states that can influence key global commons or regional stability.

As the United States consolidates and reduces overseas bases, diplomatic and military efforts should ensure that those who can afford to protect themselves do so. Responsibility to protect a region or unrestricted access to the commons should not, by default, fall to the United States in otherwise prosperous areas. It is imperative that the United States signal clearly that world security is a team effort. This is especially true in Europe.

Finally, as the United States adjusts its overseas basing structure, the United States military must be sure to build in flexibility to adjust to a changing security environment. Future reduction of overseas bases should not cost more to forfeit than they would to maintain. United States' overseas bases should maintain less infrastructure and fewer forces. The United States' commitment to provide regional forces to fight on short notice from overseas bases should be reserved only for the most critical threats to national interests in areas where host nations are unable to defend themselves.

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